

CASA in Action

A photograph of two women in traditional headscarves, one orange and one red, walking through a field of tall grass. They are carrying saplings in their hands. The background is a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The overall tone is hopeful and focused on environmental action.

CLIMATE ADAPTATION
NEED of the HOUR



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CASA is registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860, and with the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Government of India under the Foreign Contributions Regulation act. Donations to church's auxiliary for social action are exempted from Income Tax under Section 80-G.

Printed & published by:
church's auxiliary for social action
4th floor, rachna building, 2 rajendra place,
New Delhi - 110008 | website: www.casa-india.org

CASA is a member of **actalliance**

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CASA in Action
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Volume - 136 Issue - 1/2022 Jan - March 2022

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EDITORIAL

CASA's humanitarian presence in India has been the stem of financial and social upliftment of the vulnerable segments. From assisting the residents of eco-sensitive zones in building resilience against change in climatic pattern to educating women on empowerment, fostering financial independence and building camaraderie in areas infested with gender disparity - CASA's philanthropic approaches have branched on to aid the diverse issues that rural India is battling.

CASA's plantation drive, which marked the celebration of the 75th Platinum Jubilee year of the organisation, aimed to symbolically represent the role of CASA in the life of the deprived forest-dwelling tribal and rural families in the sensitive aspects of livelihood generation, empowerment, food-security, awareness and biodiversity protection.

In this edition, we endeavour to take you on a tour of the project areas of CASA where the plantation drive has begun transforming the lives of the beneficiary communities. The stories would also help you navigate the essential initiatives of CASA in empowering nature and women.

We hope that this newsletter helps you learn, explore and replicate the beauty of a conscious community.

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for Healthy Lifestyle



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Pic.: Madhav, a farmer, from Balada village of Rajasthan

Organic Farming for Healthy Lifestyle

MD MAHFOOZ ALAM

“
The crops grown using
synthetic fertiliser and
chemical pesticide are
not of good quality-
neither it tastes good
nor it is nutritious.
-says *Madhav*

For a healthy lifestyle, we need to consume healthy food; however, the food we consume these days is full of chemicals and pesticides that are not conducive to the human body.

So how did crops which come from the agricultural field become contaminated? During the 1960s, as the population was increasing rapidly, the demand for food was simultaneously increasing. India was unable to match the productivity rate with the required demand and the failure led to the hunger crisis in many parts of India.

To cope with the problem of hunger, our government in the mid-1960s decided to adopt Green revolution technologies. This changed the status of India from a food-deficient country to one of the world's leading agricultural nations.

Though the production of food grains boomed, there were many adverse effects. The HYV (High Yield Variety)



Pic.: Madhav demonstrating the process of making Vermicompost

seeds are water-intensive — high consumption of water leads to the depletion of the groundwater table. Furthermore, the excessive usage of chemical pesticides and synthetic fertilisers deteriorates soil fertility and pollutes freshwater.

Taking lessons from history, CASA has been working to promote sustainable agricultural practices in all our programme areas. Organic farming uses ecologically based pest controls and biological fertilisers derived mainly from animal and plant wastes.

Madhav, a farmer from the Balada village of Rajasthan, has been practicing organic farming for the last 24 years. CASA collaborated with him to spread awareness about organic farming and convince farmers to practice the same.

While narrating the reason for adopting organic farming, Madhav says, "The crops grown using synthetic fertiliser and chemical pesticide are not of good quality- neither it tastes good nor it is nutritious."

CASA found hesitancy among the farmers to engage in organic farming. They fear productivity will decrease, thereby leading to a loss of livelihood.

Madhav in several meetings with farmers has spoken about the reason behind low productivity. He explains, "When organic farming is deployed on a field where

inorganic products were being used for a long time, productivity in the first 2-3 years generally reduces." He further explains, "the soil, however, slowly adapts the organic manures and productivity increases after 3-4 croppings."

Madhav produces varieties of organic fertilisers. One such fertiliser is vermicompost. It is prepared by converting organic waste into fertiliser with the use of earthworm and the process is called vermicomposting.

The excretory products of earthworm, known as vermicast, improve and restores soil fertility, resulting in increased productivity of crops. Vermicast is also called Black gold because it is rich in nutrients, growth-promoting substances and soil microflora. It also has the property of inhibiting pathogenic microbes and developing synergistic relationships in plant rhizospheres

He says with conviction to other farmers, over the years, on using vermicompost, "I have found the consumption of water has reduced, the water-retention capacity of the soil has increased, fertility of the soil has increased but what satisfies me most is the improvement in the quality of crops."

Pic.: Processed Vermicompost





Ensuring Food Availability to The Marginalised Family

MD MAHFOOZ ALAM

The pandemic has been a very difficult time for 56-years old Sobhna and her husband Ramesh, who is handicapped at both his legs. As a lone breadwinner,

Sobhna somehow manages the bare minimum for her family by labouring hard as a road construction worker. But the pandemic took off her only source of income.

They live in the Mainpani village of the Sagar district of Madhya Pradesh. Like many others from marginalised sections of society, she was unable to find any stable livelihood options.

When our volunteers approached Ramesh, he inconsolably blurted out about the daily ordeals and their struggle for even a square meal a day. He was consoled and informed about the COVID-19 relief kit that CASA is providing to unprivileged families.

Ramesh now cheerfully says, "The dry ration and WaSH Kit that we received has helped minimise our misery

to a great extent, it contained everything we required and lasted more than a month ." Adding further he says, "before receiving the package, we never had a complete meal since the pandemic took a toll on our lives."

The family has also been educated about COVID Appropriate Behaviour and was made aware of the importance of handwashing and masks to protect themselves and others from contracting the virus.

Elaborating on the relief package, Ramesh says, "not only ration, but we were also provided masks, sanitisers, and soap. Now whenever my wife comes back from work, she washes her hands and feet with soap and water."

Sobhna was assisted to avail work for two months in road construction through the government scheme of Gram Panchayat. The volunteers got her in touch with the assistant secretary of the Panchayat.

The couple was also motivated to get vaccinated as they were hesitant due to the barrage of rumours doing the rounds about the vaccine. They have now both received the first dosage.

Tippy Tap — An Innovative Hand Sanitiser Station

Korku tribes are excellent agriculturalists and are pioneers in the cultivation of potatoes and coffee. They mostly live in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra. They have a distinct cultural heritage and Korku is one of the 196 languages considered endangered by UNESCO.

The tribal community living in the Khalwa block of Khandwa district in Madhya Pradesh developed an innovative hand sanitiser station which they call "Tippy Tap".

It's constructed using 4 pieces of timber trunk, a five-litre can and a five feet rope. Two vertical seven feet trunks stand buried in soil, the four feet trunk is horizontally tied between the vertical trunks and the can is hung by its handle on the horizontal trunk. The five feet rope at one end is tied to the mouth of the can and the other end is tied to a two feet trunk that touches land tilted at an angle of forty-five degrees.

The mechanism is similar to sanitiser stations installed in urban centres. When the tilted trunk is pressed by the leg, the rope pulls down the mouth of the can to an angle of forty-five degrees. And the soap water or sanitiser is easily collected on the hands.

The model has been successful and was replicated in the fifteen other villages of the Khandwa district.



Mask Bank and Community Hand Washing Stations



In far-flung rural areas, hesitancy was observed among the marginalised people in purchasing masks. The reasons could be affordability and lack of awareness.

CASA has been continuously working on raising awareness in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Several programmes are being organised across India to educate people on COVID Appropriate Behaviours - the use of masks, the importance of handwashing and maintaining social distance.

To facilitate the easy availability of masks and handwashing, mask banks and Community Handwashing Stations have been set up in many villages.

In Rahatgarh, Sagar district of Madhya Pradesh, mask banks were set up in Anganwadi centre and community centres across 15 villages. The purpose of these banks is to provide masks to the members of the marginalised communities who are unable to afford them or access their availability.

As per the requirements, masks are made available at each bank periodically. As of 31st December, 7809 masks were distributed/renewed through the banks in the Sagar district of Madhya Pradesh.

Similarly, in the 16 villages of the Gopalpur District in Madhya Pradesh, Community Hand Washing Stations were set up in Anganwadi centres and community places. The wash station consists of a 500-litre water tank and handwashing soaps.



Pic.: Community Handwashing Station set up by CASA



COVID-19 RESPONSE
(JHARKHAND) WASH KIT Distribution & Awareness Programme

Sponsored by:

Implemented by:

This Packet Contains The Following Items :-		
WASH KITS		
1. Lili Soap (Bar/125 Gms)	एलिली साबुन (बार/125 ग्रा.)	10/00
2. Surf Excel Detergent Powder (1 kg)	सर्फ एक्सेल डिटर्जेंट पावडर (1 किग्रा.)	10/00
3. 50 ml Handrub Solution	50 मी. हाथरुब सोल्यूशन	10/00
4. Sanit Hand Wipes (100 pcs)	100 पीस सैनिटाइजिंग वीप्स	10/00
5. Surf Excel Detergent Powder (100 Gms)	सर्फ एक्सेल डिटर्जेंट पावडर (100 ग्रा.)	10/00

EAST Zone, S. Russell Street, Kolkata (700071)
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(The above items are being given as Humanitarian Aid / Gift)
(NOT FOR SALE)



2020-22

COVID-19 RESPONSE



23

STATE
COVERED



16358

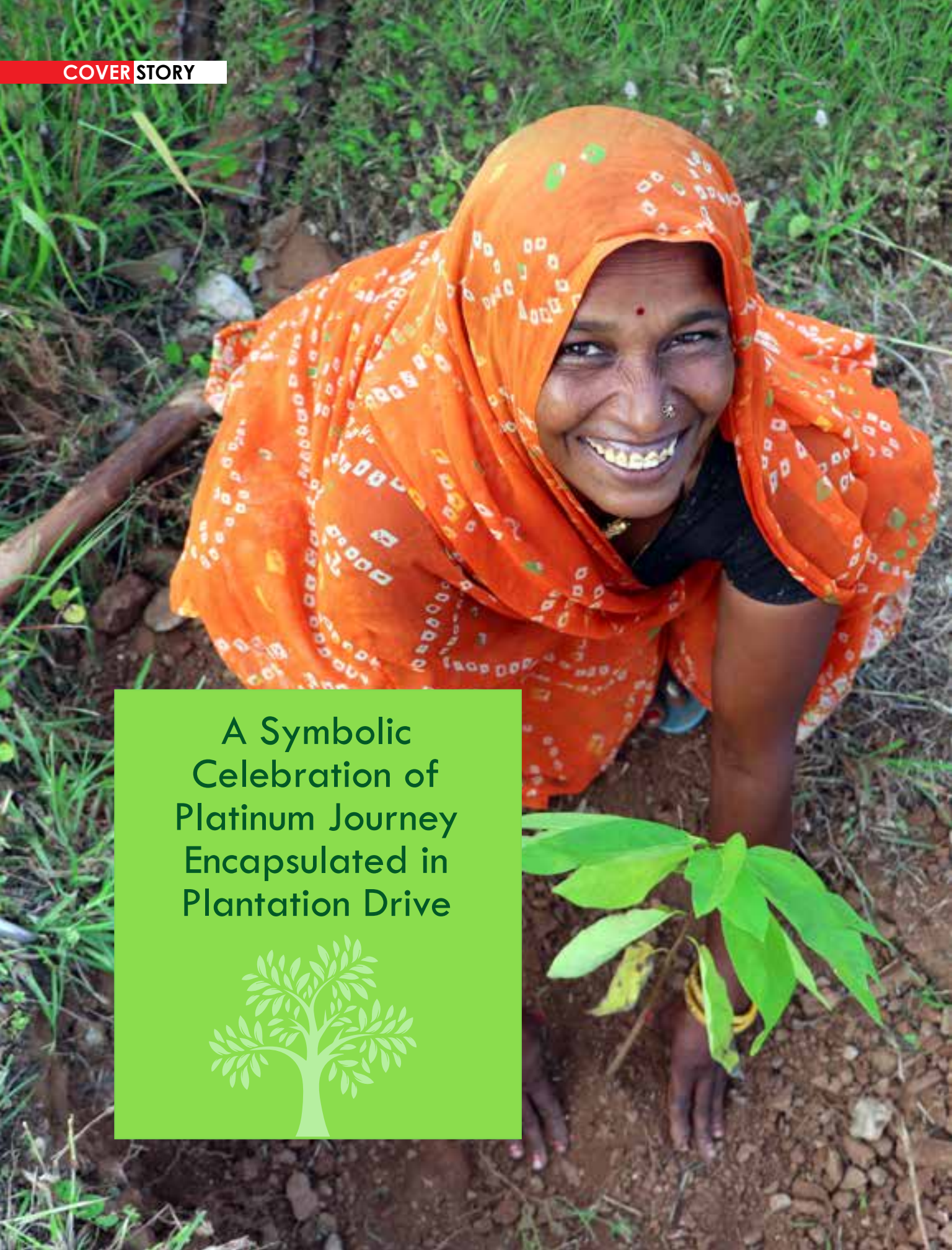
VILLAGES
COVERED



88 Lacs+

PEOPLE
REACHED

A Symbolic
Celebration of
Platinum Journey
Encapsulated in
Plantation Drive



Type of Plantation in Deifferent Agro-Ecoligical Zones

FORESTRY



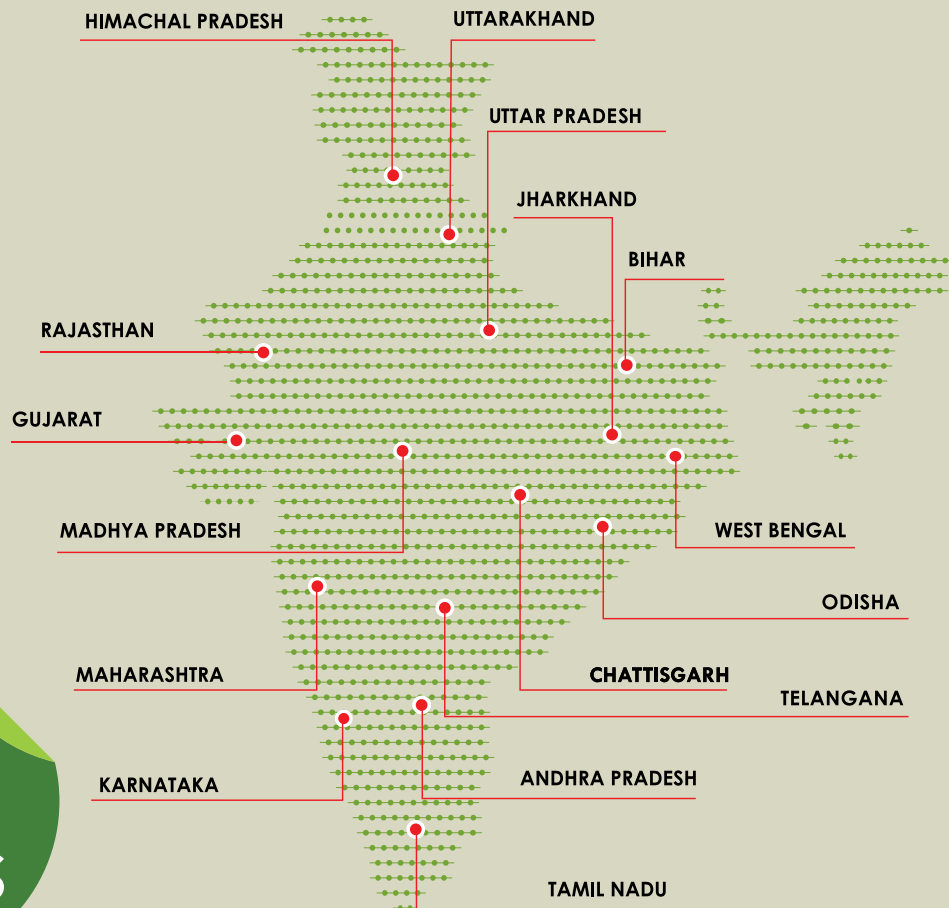
HORTICULTURE



AGRO-FORESTRY



MEDICINAL



16
states

TILL 31ST MARCH
2022

48

Districts

413

Villages



2,94,291

Plants

| ARUSHI NARCHAL | KAJOL TANAYA

Across several cultures that coexist on the Indian mainland, seeds and saplings are symbolic of prosperity, health and regeneration. Put specifically in the context of nature, saplings that grow into lush green trees promote ecological balance, assist groundwater recharge and reduce the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide. Furthermore, the non-timber products derived from fruit-bearing and medicinal plants support the livelihood of the forest-dwelling communities since a minimum selling price is attributed to every forest product by the nation's economy.

CASA, in its 75 years of operation in the humanitarian sector, has gathered immense learning and insights into the social landscape of life in the rural margins of India. From assisting the disaster-affected communities in rebuilding their lives to empowering the marginalised segments through social security schemes or activities, CASA's long string of social work has not only brought about an on-ground transformation in the project areas but has also embedded long-lasting mechanisms that will continue to uplift the rural front even after the completion of our project tenure.

The beauty of these years can not be encapsulated in words. To ensure that the Platinum Jubilee celebration aligns with the essence and reflects the meaning that our years-long engagement with the deprived communities in India carries, CASA planned a massive plantation drive.

7,50,000 saplings of trees that bear fruit or have medicinal value will be planted across CASA's project areas in India. In four months, the drive has entered its first phase in 16 states, namely Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujarat. Planted over a collective expanse of private lands, Common Property Resources under the Panchayat, areas under the Government and lands under Community Forest Rights, these saplings would enter the care of the beneficiary communities we serve across the aforementioned states.

The saplings of trees that are well adapted to the climatic and ecological components of the plantation area are carefully selected for the drive. Segregated

into the subsections of Forestry, Agroforestry, Horticulture and Medicinal value, these plants are wisely allocated the type of land that can best suit their growth and care.

Plants under Agro-Forestry include the types of Peepal, Babul, Bargad, bel, Kaiht, Drumstick, Ashok, Karanji, Sandal, Gular etc. Similarly, those under the Horticulture subsection include Fruit saplings like Guava, Mango, Jackfruit, Papaya, Blackberry, Custard apple, Ber, Karonda and so forth. Trees like Neem, Harra Behra, Aloe-vera, Jamun, Arjun, Amala, Lemon etc comprise the medicinal plants' subsection.

In the mountainous regions of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, CASA has been prioritising the plantation of Mulberry, Walnut, Plum, Malta, Kinnu, Orange, Tej Patta, Amla, Harar, Reetha, Koot, Kutki, Sameva, Dolu, Pashanbhed and Lemon, which are not only ecologically or herbally beneficial but are also commercially valuable. Indeed, the primary objective of the plantation drive is based on generating alternative streams of income for the beneficiary communities by commercially marketing the fruits and medicinal extracts of the trees in the future.

As these plants provide the rural masses with food to eat and clean air to breathe, it symbolises the core values of CASA- to support the livelihood and basic rights of the marginalised. The plantation drive also adds to our mission of strengthening and raising climate-resilient communities in disaster-prone areas such as the mountainous regions of Uttarakhand and Himachal, flash-flood affected provinces of Bihar, Jharkhand and Kerala and the states of Odisha and West Bengal that face repeated attacks from cyclones.





*Pic.: Dr. Sushant Agrawal,
Director of CASA watering
plant*

On completion of 75 years of CASA

Head of Programme, Dr. Jayant Kumar, in an interview, spoke extensively on plantation drive and other developmental programmes.

AS CASA COMPLETES ITS 75TH ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR, WHAT WAS THINKING BEHIND IDEATING A MASSIVE PLANTATION DRIVE ACROSS INDIA?

CASA as an organisation has been very conscious about the conservation of climate. The tribal communities and village communities live in the forest or nearby it, therefore, on completion of 75 years of our existence, we planned a massive plantation drive across India with the focus on engaging local communities.

IS THE PLANTATION DRIVE A PART OF OUR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES?

All our developmental programmes whether it is plantation drive, livelihood generation or other interventions are done making sure that the local environment is not harmed and the focus remains on sustainability for the long term.

WHO ARE THE PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES OF THE PLANTATION DRIVE AND HOW ARE THEY SELECTED?

We are very clear about our targeting, we work with the economically and socially marginalised sections — women, children, elderly people, scheduled caste, and scheduled tribe. There are further marginalised communities that are more vulnerable among the vulnerable

like Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVT) and Maha Dalits (MDs). These are the people we work with in remote areas and we identify beneficiaries and areas in collaboration with volunteer organisations.

WHEN WE SPEAK OF ASSISTING VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES, HOW DO WE MAKE SURE THAT THEIR OPINION AND PERSPECTIVE IS CONSIDERED FOR THE PROGRAM?

For a programme to be sustainable, the community — for whom the activities or initiatives are taken — must be the stakeholder/owner of the programme. Our staff and volunteers spend time with the targeted communities and develop working relationships identifying common issues and challenges.

Right from the inception till implementation, communities are stakeholders in the complete process/programme.

WHAT ARE THE VARIETIES OF PLANTS CHOSEN FOR THE PLANTATION DRIVE?

We have consciously chosen local varieties of plants like Babool, Mangoes and other fruit-bearing plants.

There are areas with a lack of water so we are using local, hardy plants as well as those varieties which are socially and economically beneficial to the communities in their day-to-day life.

ARE WE ALSO USING FOREIGN BREEDS?

Only if it is recommended by scientific institutions like Krishi Vigyan Kendra, we will not use any breed which will adversely affect the impact.

FROM WHERE CASA IS SOURCING THE SAPLINGS?

We are sourcing them locally from the government as well as from private nurseries.

Are the communities supplied with necessary fertilisers?

We are against chemical fertilisers, we encourage farmers to use organic fertilisers and locally produced manures. They are taught to produce and make use of organic fertilisers like vermicompost. Several training programmes are also organised where experts guide farmers on new ways of producing organic fertilisers locally.

DOES CASA SENSITISE THE BENEFICIARY COMMUNITIES ON HOW TO TAKE CARE OF THE PLANT'S HEALTH AND GROWTH?

As I answered earlier, the planning begins with beneficiary communities and during the discussions, it is collectively

decided which plant varieties are to be taken up for the plantation. Mostly the local varieties are selected so that the people can easily take care of them. They know what manure to be used, the frequency of watering etc. And if any foreign breed is introduced for the benefit of the communities — technical people, and local government officials from the Forest, Agriculture and Horticulture department are brought in to guide them.

A massive plantation drive would

require a massive land area. How did CASA select lands and make sure it is suitable for plantation?

It is always challenging for us because the availability of land is scarce. Under the Forest Rights Act, there is the provision of Community Forest Resource (CFR) in which individual forest land for a family and or collective forest land are allotted by the government to forest-dwelling communities; we are making use of these lands for the plantation.

In the non-forest area, common panchayat land or individual land is being used and we have also pooled small farmers' lands in a collective manner that has not been used for a long time.

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO BUILD A RELATIONSHIP WITH LOCAL PANCHAYAT LEADERS?

It is important to have a good functioning relationship with local leaders because the Panchayat is the third tier of the democratic process; the 73rd amendment act led to the formation of Gram Panchayats as a unit of self-

governance.

Our programmes are implemented only after obtaining a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Gram Panchayat.

HOW ARE WE MAKING SURE THAT NO DAMAGE IS BEING DONE TO THE LOCAL ECOSYSTEM?

Before implementing any project, an environmental impact study is done to assess that there is no adverse effect on the existing natural ecosystem.

HOW WILL PLANTATION DRIVE PROVIDE A LIVELIHOOD TO TARGETED COMMUNITIES?

The plantation is not being done arbitrarily, we have strategically devised a plan so that farmers start getting benefits as early as possible. Mango or jackfruit trees usually bear fruits in 10-11 years; however, we have included varieties that will start bearing fruits in a year or two.

Fast yielding plants with herbal and medicinal properties are also included, whose products will be procured locally and nationally by pharmaceutical companies.



Kachher Ki Dhani, a small hamlet located in the hilly terrain of the Udaipur district of Rajasthan is a dry village where an arid patch of land was successfully transformed into pasture land.

The major problem that the village had been facing was the scarcity of water which makes agriculture an unprofitable livelihood occupation. The rainwater runs off due to the sloppy nature of the land thereby depleting the groundwater level.

With no option to earn their livelihood, the village men mostly migrated to urban areas to work as daily wage labourers. Women stayed back to take care of household chores and livestock, however, they went

through the daily arduous routine of fetching water by walking several kilometres to plain areas and collecting fodder from the faraway forest.

To mitigate the problems, CASA along with Apna Sansthan in 2011 had started a multi-pronged Food for Community Development (FFCD) programme to convert arid land into pasture land and to also harvest rainwater.

The programme aimed for the self-sufficiency of the villagers by developing a big patch of green land within the embankment along with several water harvesting systems like Continuous Contour trench, Gully Plugs, Check Dams etc.



TRANSFORMING ARID LAND INTO PASTURE LAND



Udai Lal Rawat, a representative of Kachher Ki Dhani from Charaga Vikas Samiti, heaping praise on CASA and Apna Sansthan says, "the women of the village no longer walk kilometres to fetch water and fodder. The groundwater level has increased and there is no shortage of fodder for livestock. Since the time cattle have been grazing on green fodder of pasture land, milk production has increased."

He further adds, "men returned to the village to do farming again; water is available in so much abundance, even if there is a drought for a year, there will be no impact on agriculture."

The pasture land was developed in 66 Bigha land. The land is equally divided among the beneficiary families who are also the caretaker. Under the plantation drive on 75 years of CASA, all the families of Kachher Ki Dhani were provided with several fruit-bearing and medicinal saplings to grow within their area.

Rawat says, "When the saplings grow up, it will enrich the pastureland and will be beneficial to villagers in myriad ways. The tree will prevent soil erosion, increase water retention capacity, the leaves falling off will increase soil fertility and its products will be sold in the market which will be an extra source of income for the villagers."



Prabhu Lal is a 60-year-old farmer from Kapasan village of Udaipur, Rajasthan. Under our plantation drive campaign, he received 50 saplings of different varieties of fruit-bearing plants.

He planted the saplings on his farmland and has been meticulously taking care of each sapling. Lal says, "I will have multiple benefits when the saplings grow into trees – the fruits will be sold in the market, the root will prevent soil erosion and leaves falling off the tree will be natural fertiliser for the soil, thereby increasing the production of other crops."

He believes that these plants will not only help his family in generating extra income but will also combat the climate crisis. Lal further explains, "the plantation drive by the CASA is an excellent initiative, this will improve the cycle of monsoon resulting in timely rainfall."

Thanking CASA he says, "I had been thinking for a long time to plant trees but due to the lack of resources, the plan was never executed, I hope CASA engages many other farmers in the plantation drive."

Statements of farmers from Kachher Ki Dhani, Rajasthan and Jharkhand

MD MAHFOOZ ALAM



Babu Lal,
Rajasthan

"The pasture land created by the CASA has been highly beneficial to me and other villagers. Now there is no shortage of grass and water. We hope that the pastureland will be extended in the future and that more fruit-bearing and medicinal plants will be planted. The trees will be an additional source of income and will also improve the environment and climatic condition of our locality".



Babru Lal,
Rajasthan

I am a farmer and labourer also. With the construction of the wall around the pastureland, the benefits have increased. Now there is no scarcity of grass for livestock. With the construction of check dams, the retention capacity of soil has increased, leading to an increase in groundwater levels.

We live in a hilly area and the summer is extremely hot. When these saplings grow into trees, we can at least escape the wrath of heat in the shadow of these trees.

Plantation as a source of livelihood opportunities is a great endeavour toward sustainable development. This will protect the environment and will also stop the future generation from migrating to urban centres".



Devender
Oraon,
Jharkhand

"I am a beneficiary turned volunteer. In the 75 years of completion of CASA, we are running a plantation drive to plant fruit-bearing trees. Planting these trees is an investment for us and it will be greatly beneficial to our children in future as a source of income generation.

A variety of fruits will be consumed by our children and the extra production will be sold in the market. Our success will be an encouragement for others to plant fruit-bearing trees and generate a livelihood opportunity out of it.

Jharkhand is a financially struggling state and we need to engage in sustainable activities like this to fight poverty and improve our lifestyle. We need to become self-dependent for our development and the development of Jharkhand."



Rajdeep Puri,
Jharkhand

"In the Oraon community, they have immense respect for nature and trees, therefore, these saplings will be given motherly nurture and care. When these trees start bearing fruits, it will improve the economic prospect of the villagers.

We are encouraging locals, especially women to participate in the plantation drive because life, livelihood and protection of nature are dependent on trees."



Chander Prakash,
Rajasthan

"Mainly Tribal families residing in Kachher Ki Dhani are landless and some of them own small patches of land which are mostly rocky, uneven and infertile. They are dependent on farming and daily wage labour work for their livelihood.

Agriculture is no longer a viable option for them because of changes in climatic patterns; earlier rainfall used to be for four months but now it does not even last for a month. This is why they have become disinterested in agriculture and mostly engage in labour work.

However, due to the pandemic, there is no demand for labour work, which has aggravated their struggle for life.

Now we have encouraged them to grow green vegetables and fruit-bearing plants like mango and sapota (cheeku) so that they can have some of the vegetables and fruits in their home and sell the remaining in the market to earn a livelihood.

The area faces infrequent availability of electricity, which is again a problem to practise any kind of farming activities. Easy availability of water is scarce and farming is possible only by pumping groundwater through electric motors.

To deal with this problem we have provided solar panels so that electric motors can be used for irrigation."



Herbs for Life & Livelihood

| SURESH SATAPATHY

| EDITS: KAJOL TANAYA

Nature is a resourceful healer. Thousands of years ago, Ayurveda originated from the Indian subcontinent, finding the earliest mentions in the Atharvaveda. The traditional utilisation of herbs to cure physical illnesses gradually build the path to India's Golden Age of Medicine (800 BCE to 1000 CE) marked by the production of medical treatises such as the Caraka-Samhita, by Charaka, a physician, and Susruta-Samhita, by Susruta, a surgeon. These medical treatises highlighted the importance of specific herbs in the medical procedures of preventive and curative treatment. Even in contemporary times, the use of

traditional herbs in healing diseases has been duly recognised for its effectiveness. Efforts to integrate indigenous Indian knowledge and western medical practices continue to shape the dimensions of Ayurveda in the current healthcare system.

We are residing in an unpredictable era. On one hand, the advancements in healthcare have increased the average lifespan of human beings and on the other hand, the atrocities caused to environment and erratic lifestyle practises have given rise to several health complexities. Including the coronavirus pandemic in

perspective, health has become a sensitive matter to the entire globe over the past decade. Despite the advent of allopathic medicine, there has been an increase in the demand for medicinal plants, which is why - India, being one of the naturally abundant biodiversity centres with over 45,000 plant species, can become a torchbearer of herbal and natural cure to the world. Organic herbs facilitate greener, sustainable and better ways to healthcare. They also open up potential alternative livelihood avenues for pastoral and forest-dwelling communities, who can raise and supply medicinal herbs to the ailing planet.



the Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh was specifically chosen to shelter the most thoughtful project of a herbal garden that is ecologically diverse, supportive of rural life, conducive to eco-tourism and commercially beneficial to the assignees.

Since the rural economy of Himachal Pradesh depends considerably on the selling of medicinal and aromatic herbs, and the state is home to 24 of the 100 most traded medicinal plants in the country, a large-scale plantation of herbal saplings could provide all-year-round local self-employment opportunity to the forest-dwelling communities, even through the challenging seasons and lockdowns. To make the concept come alive, CASA joined hands with the Forest Department of Himachal Pradesh to establish a community-owned "Herbal Vatika".

Herbal Vatika

The plantation drive, initiated in celebration of 75 platinum years of CASA's humanitarian service, charted the allocation of 7,50,000 fruit-bearing and medicinal plants to CASA's project areas across India. Therein,

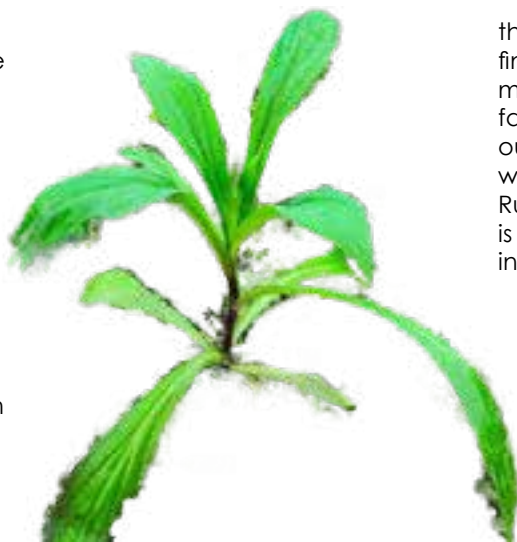
The word "Vatika" in Sanskrit stands for "garden", referring to the traditional roots of the concept. It has been set up on 1 hectare of forest land at Osan Village which was claimed by the beneficiary community through the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006. After the selection of the site, CASA's coordinator charted strategies and action plan for the plantation to be carried out in three phases:

Phase 1: Clearing of bushes and digging pits for the plantation by the rural community members
 Phase 2: Fencing around the Vatika to stop grazing of animals and the construction of a mini-pond for the water management
 Phase 3: Plantation of saplings

Thousand plants of fifteen locally available and twelve new varieties of medicinal species, which have a prominent commercial value and natural significance, were planted in the Herbal Vatika. The herbs began sprouting into tiny plants in the latter half of February 2022.

While CASA took charge of procuring the plants, teaching the community members about the value of the herbs, enabling sustainable extraction and connecting them to pharmaceutical companies, the Forest Department facilitated legal arrangement and fencing support. Van Samridhi and Jan Samridhi Community volunteer organisations committed to the caretaking of the plants and the G.B. Pant National Research Institute of Himalayan Environment & Sustainable development of Mohal provided technical support for operation and maintenance needs. The stakeholders and agencies decided to meet quarterly to discuss the management of the Herbal Garden.

The Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, Jai Ram Thakur, on his visit to the village in March, appreciated the initiative and directed the administration to provide possible assistance. On April 25, 2022, Deputy Commissioner Kullu Shri Ashutosh Garg and other administrative officers inspected the Herbal Vatika and asked the Forest Department,



Panchayati Raj Department and Rural Development Department to provide technical and financial support for its management.

Herbal Vatika – A Vision to Help the People & the Planet

"The villagers living in Osan have never utilised the rich diversity of nearby forest to their advantage. CASA is now helping them to develop Herbal Vatika in the forest land. The organisation facilitated the plantation of medicinal species which will be ready by the next year. We appreciate the initiative of CASA and will work together to develop Herbal Vatika as a model garden," says Prabhat Dadwal, President of Van Samridhi Jan Samridhi, CUG Osan.

A local villager Chudamani says, "I belong to a poor family with very little land. To earn our livelihood, we are dependent on MGNREGA. However, this year we also worked in the Herbal Vatika. The plants will be ready by next year and we will not have to solely depend on MGNREGA to earn our livelihood."

The Vatika will directly benefit around 50 families in the area. The plants grown in the herbal Vatika will generate income for

the villagers in two ways. First, the final product will be sold in the market by the local beneficiary families under the supervision of our volunteers. Second, Vatika will also be developed for rural Rural and Eco-tourism Activities. It is widely believed that the tourism industry, particularly ecotourism, contributes significantly to sustainable development.

However, planning for ecotourism development is a multi-criteria process that commonly involves spatial analysis

Hira Lal Thakur, a volunteer of CASA, who conducts the activities of CASA Herbal Vatika, says, "This unique initiative will prove to be an important link in environmental protection along with providing new options for self-employment.

Biri Devi, worker and beneficiary at CASA Herbal Vatika shared, "CASA has been supporting us for many years and has given herbs to set up the Vatika. I have also been given 150 new varieties of plum, apricot, walnut, and pomegranate to plant in my field. I thank CASA for this cooperation. Due to paucity of money, I was not able to do plantations in the field but now CASA has helped and removed my burden".

"With the establishment of this Vatika, the hassle of travelling for work is going to end. In the coming time, full-year employment will be available here. Apart from planting saplings in the Herbal Vatika, we also managed the water system through mini pond construction and fencing to enable proper maintenance. At the same time, we are also handling the responsibility of taking care of these plants throughout the year. This cooperation of CASA will give us a new direction in our socioeconomic empowerment", enumerates Tarjan Singh, a beneficiary.





MONJURI MONDAL
Assistant Project Officer
East Zone

**EDITS - ARUSHI NARCHAL
KAJOL TANAYA**

Gender- Responsive Empowerment Towards Climate Adaptation

The change in climatic pattern is responsible for certain irreversible damage to ecosystems around the world. The effects are adversely affecting the lives of the world's vulnerable class. We, at CASA, believe in community-based, sustainable work, at the grassroots, not only to empower the communities we collaborate with but also to have a larger positive impact on the social and natural environment we work in.

Several evidence show that women are at a greater risk of the negative impacts of climate deterioration. The two-week-long 66th Commission on the Status of Women which took place in March 2022 had a priority theme focused on "Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate adaptation, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes". However, women and girls shouldn't only be presented as the victims of climate menace. They are also the agents of change, and it is crucial to ensure their meaningful participation in relevant climate-related activities and environmental processes, including legislation.

As we continue to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee year of our Organization, the plantation drive of 7,50,000 plants across India is picking up an accelerated pace.

Women in our project areas have also come together to take part in the plantation drive.

The plantation of economically beneficial trees was envisioned as a long term process-oriented approach where women are engaged in manifold ways for empowerment leading to resilient and sustainable development. The saplings that have been planted are usually in the common lands of the villages along with a few in homesteads. Many of these saplings have also been planted in their paddy fields in a manner that the excess water from the crops would move towards these plants and help them grow without any additional watering, thus mitigating the scarcity of water and its allied labour intensified activities.

Planting saplings would recognize the existing capacities and opportunities already available in the local areas among these women groups, further promoting collaborative ways of learning and adaptive management. These groups of beneficiaries were trained from several areas of agriculture and farming like Palandu Agriculture and Research Centre of Jharkhand and Farmers Producer Company in Alipurduar, West Bengal. Exposure visits made these women more confident and familiar with climate friendly ways of enhancing their produce along with

marketing the yields. They were also capacitated on land preparations, spacing methods, irrigation and inter cropping along with protective measures. Knowledge on post harvest management such as grading, storage, packing, transportation and marketing was also imparted. They were also oriented on the processes of seed preparation in agriculture farming along with the preparation of vermin and compost pits.

The selection of trees was also carefully decided by the women's groups through a participatory approach. The plantation of betel nut trees in Alipurduar was selected for its market value as well as for its leaves which are now used to make eco-friendly plates and bowls. It can also be planted in the middle of the other plants, taking up much less space. The lemon tree was selected in Alipurduar as it is drought tolerant in the very warm climates of the region with an all year round yield. The litchi, guava, jackfruit and mango trees in each of the areas were unanimous as they are a good income yielding trees along with nutritional value and lend great shade during the summer months. The women also ensured that all these trees would be organically maintained.

JHARKHAND



Gumla : 650 fruit bearing plants

Sahibganj: 1245 fruit bearing plants

Nature has always been the heart and soul of the tribal people of Jharkhand, CASA is currently working in the two districts of Gumla and Sahibganj. CASA has distributed six hundred and fifty fruit-bearing trees as a climate-friendly sustainable source of income generation in ten villages, covering six panchayats in the district of Gumla. In Sahibganj a total of twenty-five villages, covering six panchayats have been reached, distributing one thousand two hundred and forty-five trees. The local varieties of mango, jackfruit, litchi, Indian jujube, and drumsticks have been distributed to the women who form our primary beneficiaries.

ODISHA



The core program area of Telkom, in the Keonjhar district of Odisha is inhabited by the Bhuiyas, Mundas, Gonds and the particularly vulnerable tribal group of Juangs. Local varieties of eleven hundred fruit-bearing trees of mango and guava have been distributed to women, primarily with coverage of fourteen villages and five-gram panchayats.

WEST BENGAL



In the district of Alipurduar of West Bengal, CASA is engaged with the Munda, Oraon, Mech, Rabha and Santal tribes who have also been engaged in sustainable income generation through the plantation of One thousand seven hundred and thirty trees including lemon, betel nut, Indian jujube and guava trees over seven villages in four-gram panchayats.

CASA's initiatives in the states of Jharkhand, West Bengal and Odisha through its core program have built resiliency. Despite women being the most vulnerable victims of climate menace, they are becoming climate champions in their areas and the agents of resiliency by adapting and mitigating.

A small part of the yields from these products will be contributed to the community-based institutions that each belongs to, by collaborating to change the factors which range from the social systems to risks, fragility and vulnerabilities. These community-based organizations formed by CASA promote progressive and collective thinking according to the context-specific changes in the local areas. Women of these areas in their own ways are incorporating the traditional as well as new-age technology and contributing to reducing the factors causing change in climatic condition.

CASA, in 75 years of its organisational existence has almost become a living entity in rural India. People do not only invest confidence in the organisation's approach but also consider CASA's team to be a trustworthy family. The world has been a witness to the empathy and assistance that CASA provides to distressed communities.

"I joined CASA at the age of 23. It has been more than three decades since my association wherein I have been responsible for a variety of humanitarian programs. I started as a community organiser. Posted in Odisha, I remember taking a ride on my bicycle along the bumpy and kaccha road to

volunteer for the Lymphatic Filariasis Eradication Program of CASA", recollects 56 years old Jonathan Raut, Project Officer, CASA.

He casts a brief light on his wide fabric of experience, "Back in those early days of my career, I was posted in the tribal belts of Odisha with a dearth of infrastructural facilities such as electricity or well-constructed roads. I never regretted this choice since those challenges helped me understand the reality on the ground. Working towards improving those situations has groomed me up so well.

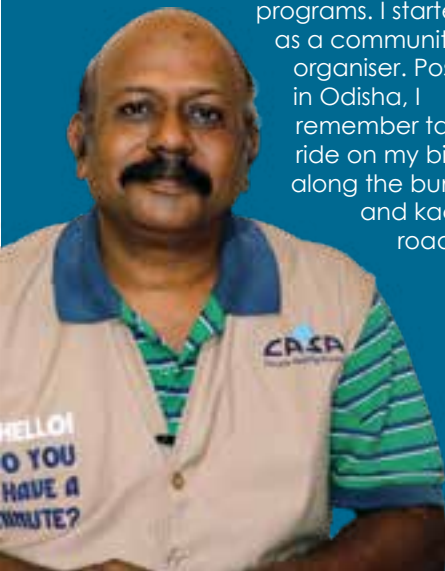
"Even in the celebration of our 75th anniversary, we have come up with a multifaceted plantation drive that targets two major fronts: sustainable livelihood support and replenishing the natural flora. The fruit-bearing plants that we are providing to the beneficiary communities in our core project areas, will not only assist their food security but will also benefit the environment.

Especially in times of the pandemic, these kinds of assistance and aid

matter a lot to the marginalised families who have lost their source of livelihood.

Across the East Zone, we have provided seed and fertiliser, dry ration, cooked meals and hygiene kits to returnee migrants, single women headed families, orphans, the elderly and tribal groups. Awareness, vaccination and handwash campaigns were conducted for every family, supplementing them with WASH and Dignity kits in the rural and tribal belts to ensure that they follow necessary COVID-19 precautions and stay safe".

Jonathan concludes that at 75 years of organisational existence, CASA is not turning old, it is growing young. The credit for CASA's continued relevance and transformation into an almost living entity in rural areas goes to the constantly evolving approaches of the organisation in assessing and aiding humanitarian needs.



Jonathan Raut :
Project Officer

Women's Day History and Important Steps Taken



1907

International Conference of Socialist Women, led by Clara Zetkin, gathered at Stuttgart, Germany to demand Universal Suffrage for women without qualification bias, the increased representation of women in the workforce, equal pay and participation of women in the Worker's Rights Organisation.



1908

The United States' Socialist Party called a mass gathering of working women in Chicago on May 3rd to protest in favour of the female workers' cause.



1909

Demanding better payment and equal labour rights, the United States' Socialist Party and Women's National Committee carried out movements in the streets of New York on February 28th, led by Theresa Malkiel, marking the day as the First National Woman's Day celebration in the US.



1910

(August) The Second International Conference of Working Women, conducted in Copenhagen, was attended by 100 delegates from 17 countries where Clara Zetkin proposed the idea of celebrating an annual International Women's Day.



1911

On the 40th Anniversary of the Paris Commune, The first International Woman's Day was celebrated in European countries, predominantly in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland, on March 19th. The day was observed to address the issues faced by working women in terms of Reproductive Rights, Equal Pay Rights, Voting Rights and so on.

1912

The Lawrence Textile Strike in the United States, also known as "Bread & Roses Strike", a term coined by polish-born American Socialist Feminist Rose Schneidermann, demanded that "Workers must have bread but she must have roses, too" meaning, more than just the bread to feed on, working women deserve dignity and healthy working standards (roses), popularising identical motives as Woman's Day in the United States.



1913

Russian women observed their first Woman's Day



1914

All the organisers of International Women's Day in Russia were imprisoned by state orders. It was also the year when the First World War began, increasing the headcount of women in the factories as the men marched into the war.



1917

Heavily impacted by the unequal wage, improper working conditions and mistreatment at work, Russian working women stormed the street of Petrograd on 23rd February (on the Russian calendar and 8th March on the Gregorian calendar) condemning gender inequality, the ill impact of war, starvation and the rule of the Czar. The movement was joined by not only factory workers but people from all economic strata such as students, teachers and even the State Regiments who were ordered by the Czar to open fire on the protestors but eventually switched sides to support the women.





1917

(contd.) Seven days after the February Revolution in Russia was inaugurated by the International Women's Day activists' protest in Petrograd, Czar Nicholas II was abdicated, ending the 304 years long Romanov rule over Russia. The provisional government granted women "The Right to Vote". The success of the movement in Russia was noted all over the world and March 8th (Gregorian equivalent to February 23 on Russian Calendar) marked the new International Women's Day to commemorate the revolutionary efforts of these women activists.



1921

Clara Zetkin conducted the International Conference of Communist Women in Moscow declaring March 8th as the official date for the celebration of International Women's Day in European countries.



1922

March 8th was declared a Public Holiday by Lenin. Chinese communists also adopted the day. Slowly the progress of Women's Day started to lose record as most believed that the day was meant to demand the Right to Vote which the women in Russia were granted, hence, dampening any need for further celebration.



1936

The rule of Stalin in the Soviet Union reversed liberal policies and banned abortion. Women's Rights to Vote became useless. The West stopped favouring the celebration of Woman's Day for its Russian and communist connections.



1945

(interwar years) Socialists and Social democrats began using the term "Women's Day" instead of "Woman's Day" to separate their movement from the communist origins of Russian activists. Then on, Women's Day was only celebrated in some Socialist countries until the 1970s.

1977



The UN adopted the Resolution proclaiming International Women's Day as the United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace which offers the world "a time to reflect on the progress made and celebrate acts of courage and determination of ordinary women".

1970



The European Feminists celebrated Women's Day as "International Day of Struggle For Women" which was distant from party politics with no socialist or communist ties, which was also a key feature of the 1970s-80s women's movements.

1975



In the International Women's Year, the formal celebration of International Women's Day was conducted on March 8th by the United Nations. Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman in Space was the Soviet Representative.

2011



Commemorating the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day. President Barack Obama proclaimed March 2011 to be "Women's History Month" in the US, recognising "the extraordinary accomplishments of women" in shaping the country's history over the century.

Top Women Leader Who Makes a Change in Society (Indian)

INSPIRING WOMEN IN THE ACTIVISM SPACE OF INDIA

HISTORICAL ACTIVISTS:

Empowering Generations through Education: Savitri Bai Phule



Born on January 3, 1831, in Naigaon village in Maharashtra, Savitri Bai Phule is recognised as India's first female educator who broke the boundaries of gender and caste discrimination to educate not only herself but her peers and the trailing generation of Dalit women. She was married at a tender age to activist Jyotiba Phule, who began the revolution toward social equality by educating his wife. The couple started India's first girl's school run by Indians implementing unique approaches such as the stipend system to encourage education among lower caste girls. Savitri Bai Phule advocated liberation from child marriage, sati system and female foeticide through her established Mahila Seva Mandali. She inspired her Muslim peer, Fatima Sheikh in becoming India's first Muslim female educator. Having opened an educational centre together, Savitri Bai and Fatima also worked towards destabilising the orthodox religion bias among savarnas and orthodox Muslims.

Claiming Political, Social and Cultural Dignity: Ramabai Ranade



Born on 25 January 1862 in Maharashtra's Sangli district, Ramabai Ranade is a revolutionary feminist in Indian history. She was married to Mahadev Govind Ranade at the age of 11. MG Ranade, an active social reformer supported his wife's education and sent her to school. After her education, she joined her husband's Prarthana Samaj to connect with women and encourage them. Through the meetings and events, Ramabai addressed the issues of women, promoted women's education and trained them in essential skills such as public speaking, writing, knitting, sports etc. She founded the Seva Sadan Society, a nursing and medical association that made women appear in the shoes of caregivers in the professional space. Despite the resistance from the conservative space, Ramabai continued to provide professional and vocational skill training to marginalised women. She participated in the delegation, led by Sarojini Naidu, to the State Secretary for India demanding enfranchising of Indian women in 1917. Ramabai also played a role in organising the women's suffrage movement in Maharashtra in 1921-22.

Contemporary Activists:



VANDANA SHIVA: Recognised by TIME as an environmental hero in 2003, winner of the Right Livelihood Award in 1993, Sydney Peace Prize 2010 and listed in BBC100, she is an environmental activist whose call for the campaign against

genetically modified seeds and protection of native seeds gave a loud call to sustainable practices in ecological proliferation and nation-wide movement Navdaya to conserve biodiversity.



KAMLA BHASIN: A prominent writer, poet, social scientist, feminist and activist, Bhasin has contributed significant efforts toward gender equality, human rights, poverty alleviation, and peace in South Asia since 1970. She worked towards mitigating starvation, illiteracy

and marginalisation of the poor. Her vision toward developmental feminism inspired young feminists to transcend socio-political biases through a collective progressive approach to improving inclusivity and uplifting peers.



SHARMILA REGE: Identified as a prominent Dalit-women activist, her emphasis on the empowerment of marginalised women through education, skill training and

social encouragement opened a canvas of wider inclusivity for the section of the society that is often neglected. She criticised the patriarchal, sexist and casteist oppression of marginalised masses, conveying communities on utilising their privileges in making the society a more inclusive and diversity-tolerant space.

Padma Awards Winning Activists:



TULASI GOWDA: 78 years old environmentalist known as the "Encyclopedia of the Forest"



PAPPAMAL: 106 years old advocate of organic farming

Atrocity against women (domestic violence, rape cases etc)

Statistics on Crime Against Women in India

2020: Latest Report on the Crime Against Women in India by The Crime Bureau of India (Volume I) lists:

- 226 victims of **Murder with gangrape**
- 7,045 victims of **Dowry Deaths**
- 1,12,292 victims of **Domestic Cruelty**
- 63,693 victims of **Abduction** of which under the category of abduction for forced marriage, 13,862 victims were aged above 18 and 11,236 were minor girls. 2,480 girls were victims under procurement of minor girls.
- 943 victims of **Trafficking**
- 28,153 victims of **rape**, of which 25,498 were aged above 18 and 2,655 were aged less than 18.
- 86,745 victims of **Molestation**

Total reported IPC Crime against women in India (2020):

3,11,354

Cases pending from the previous year (2019):

1,71,793

Reopened cases:

137

Total cases recorded by the CBI in 2020:

4,83,284

Cases that were dismissed due to lack of evidence, abated during the investigation, true but insufficient information, false claims, FR non-cognizable, mistake of facts / Civil dispute etc: 74,492

Women's Day 2022 Celebration

On the occasion of International Women's Day 2022, team CASA set out the message of the **BreakTheBias**, advocating equal rights and opportunities for women. CASA celebrated International Women's Day by appreciating and presenting all its women colleagues with Memento of Life: **"You are Adorable, You are Powerful."** Our Director, Sushant Agrawal,

spoke on the lack of opportunities for women and unequal pay even in developed countries. He emphasised that every day should be celebrated as Women's Day.

All our programmes zones organised celebrations to encourage a gender-equal society which is inclusive and is not discriminatory in any way towards girls and women. The celebration catered from local cultural activities to workshops and awareness programmes. Women volunteers and beneficiaries working with CASA who have shown

exemplary leadership qualities were also facilitated.

POUL LUTHER

ANITA KUKRETI

RAJAT CHOWDHURY

KAMAL KUMAR

LESEHU MERU

VRUSHALI KADAM

SHUBHAM PRADHAN

AKHIL BIHARE



CHHATTISGARH:

A three-day workshop was organised from 7 March 2022 to 9 March 2022 in Surguja, Chhattisgarh to celebrate International Women's Day.

The workshop aimed to promote gender equality at the village and community levels through awareness and sensitisation. The training activities were designed and implemented in a gender-sensitive manner to ensure that women, men and youth can actively participate and understand gender perspectives.

The activities were held using various participatory methods: film on gender issues followed by focussed group discussion, skit, drama, games, and other creative activities. Women from the tribal community played Kabaddi which provided them mental and physical respite from their everyday mundane lives.

Also, In the Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh, the International

Women's day programme was organised for two days at RRC Lalmati. A total of 325 participants from three neighbouring districts and four blocks took part in the celebration. The chief guest of the programme was Kirti Kiran Norge (Sector supervisor, Women's and child development department, Kota Block) and Rina Nayak (Health supervisor, PHC Chapora).

Three street plays were shown in the programme: first, Alcohol consumption by male members and its effect on the women of the house; second, how migration leads to women's exploitation; third, less nutrition consumption by women and its adverse effect. The overall objective of the street plays was to make women aware and motivate them to fight against oppression and for their fundamental rights.



RAJASTHAN:

In Banswara, Rajasthan, women Sarpanch of the CASA project area,

women police constable, ANM and Asha workers, women members of Janpad and school principals were invited to the International Women's Day celebration.

The guests were welcomed with dance and songs by girl children and local women.

Women from marginalised communities celebrated the special day by performing traditional dances to folk songs. On the theme, Break the Bias, a game of Matka race was organised exclusively for the men so that they get to know how difficult it is for women to carry a Matka full of water on their

heads. The game of Tug of War was performed by the women to exhibit, that they are capable of doing physical activities which require great strength. The best performers of all activities were rewarded by CASA.

Stalls were also set up by women to showcase and sell their traditional artwork. In one of the stalls, a woman earned Rs 800 by selling beautiful clay pots of varying designs and another woman earned Rs 1000 by selling bamboo products like bamboo baskets and bamboo dry brooms.



UTTAR PRADESH:

On the eve of International Women's Day, a campaign on 'Equal Wages for Equal Work' was organised by gender cadres in 24 POs. of UP. The prime objective was to sensitise and organise women on the issue of unequal wages - women are paid less than men for doing the same work. A rally of women labourers marched to raise the issues of unequal pay, long working hours and deprivation of basic facilities during work. A Women's labour force was also formed at the community level to carry the issues forward.

A convention was also organised in which the women spoke about the injustices that they go through in their daily lives. The convention was attended by Social welfare officers, BDO, and CDPO; they applauded the efforts of the women and motivated them to further raise their issues collectively.

MADHYA PRADESH:

In Madhya Pradesh, International Women's Day was celebrated by CASA Resource Center in Gram Panchayat Kundi. A total of 142 women and 30 men from 20 villages participated in the celebration.

The objective of the celebration was to encourage the Mahila Haat market, to recognise the farming activities of women, to make women aware of their rights, to encourage the skill development of women and highlight the struggles and achievements of women leaders.

The program was completely organised by the women and participants were entertained with folk songs. The guests on stage were honoured by the Dhasai Rayyat, a tribal dance performed by Mangoli Bai.

To get the women's experience of earning money and self-sufficiency, a Haat was also organised, wherein, under our programme, Khusiyon Ki Baadi, women farmers were asked to sell green vegetables grown in their Kitchen-garden.





WEST ZONE:

International Women's Day was observed in CASA's West Zone on 8 March 2022 in all our programme areas. Both the zonal office and all on-field staff observed the theme **#BreaktheBias**, alongside various programmes, were conducted for community women to observe the day. Women and men, staff, volunteers and community members came together and posed for pictures in a cross-hands pose as a means to create awareness of gender justice.

All programme areas attempted to encourage the imagination of a gender-equal world, free of discrimination and inclusive in all its contexts. The Farmers' Suicide Mitigation and Recovery Project discussed women's rights and an equal future in Beed, Maharashtra, along with women from the community.

They also included PRA training for 10 villages in Chaklamba (Village), wherein methods and tools involved in PRA were shared among community members. In Surat, Gujarat, the Umarpada Core Programme team observed IWD222 with female volunteers and other active members of their community, and so did the Core Programme team for Salekasa (Gondia). On the other hand, the Latur (Maharashtra) Core Programme area organized a gender sensitisation and leadership programme for women members of the community.

CASA West Zone also included transwomen in the observation of IWD222 in Ahmednagar, to set an example of inclusivity.



SOUTH ZONE:

International Women's Day was observed and celebrated at CASA Zonal Office in Chennai highlighting the 2022 theme: "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow". The programme was attended by Ms. Nalini Devi, Advocate and Professor at Law University, Chennai. She appreciated initiatives and programmes run by CASA at all levels to empower girls and women in rural areas. She said that awareness impacts the development of women toward self-reliance. Giving the example of the Women's Welfare Society, SHG; she highlighted, that these platforms are vital in empowering women to take up the roles of managers, entrepreneurs, leaders, elected representatives etc.

She also talked about the women related laws, and women's welfare schemes available in the government for the empowerment of women for a sustainable tomorrow.

ALIPURDUAR, WEST BENGAL:

A one-day programme was conducted to celebrate International Women's Day at Satkodali village. The women leaders from the community shared their experiences of working with CASA. Mrs. Lahsi Bhagat Pancha spoke on her journey of becoming a Panchayat Samiti member. A debate was organised on women's empowerment and gender sensitivity. The winners were duly rewarded. The three most proactive women leaders were honoured with mementoes for their inspirational work for the community.



GHAGRA, JHARKHAND

Women's day was celebrated with great pomp and show, participants danced to folk songs. The guest gave motivational speeches highlighting the exceptional work of women leaders. The B.D.O of Ghaghra Block honoured ten women's leaders with trophies and traditional Gamcha. The B.D.O spoke on women's empowerment for a better society.





BORIO, JHARKHAND

International

Women's Day was celebrated to sensitize men and women on the issues like domestic violence and unequal opportunity for women.

On the theme "Break the Bias", the participants were made aware of their rights and provisions provided to them by the government. People motivated by the event took an oath to provide equal opportunities to their children irrespective of gender. Some of the women were honoured with mementoes. A woman who graduated this year from the PVTG group was also felicitated.



BIHAR

International Women's Day was celebrated in integration with ten days Right to Education campaign — as education is one of the key instruments for social change and equality. The basic objectives were to raise awareness about women's rights and equal opportunities in every field, to ensure quality and elementary education for all children, and to understand the current scenario of education in the selected village, blocks and district.

The event started with the planting of a tree. The celebration emphasised spreading awareness about various social issues like the killing of the girl child, the dowry system, honour killing, sexual harassment in the workplace, gender-based violence etc.



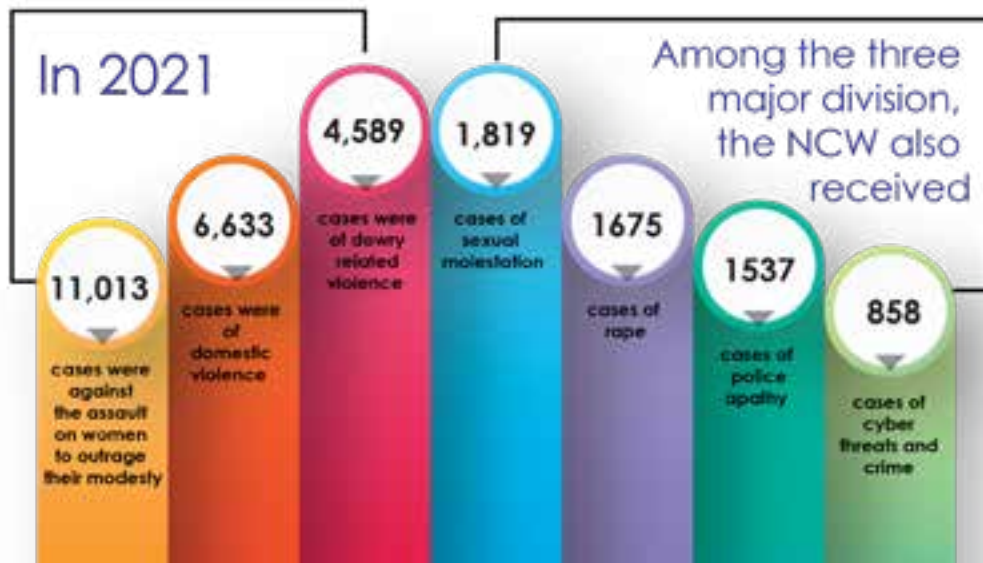
TELKOI, ODISHA

International Women's Day was

observed at Tamang in an attempt to integrate women from the programme villages to participate in the development process. A women's group was formed to take up programmes at the Block level. Different issues relating to women were discussed with the highlight on the safety and security of women in the present scenario. The present law and amendments were also discussed.



2020-2021 National Commission of Women reports:



23,722

cases of gender-based violence were reported in 2020

30,864

cases of gender-based violence were reported in 2021 (30% more than the past year)

Testimonials from the Programme on Women's Day at Madhya Pradesh Kundi Resource Centre



SEEMA MARSKOLE

"When I began attending the sessions conducted by the village's development committees, I was unable to put my thoughts across or speak up my perspectives. However, I was keen on participating. When CASA conducted the youth leadership programme, I was asked to join since I used to frequent development-related meetings in the village. I happily did so. Whatever information or guidelines were provided to us, I started implementing them. During the presentations, we received a fair opportunity to participate in discussions, ask questions or answer them. We were encouraged to speak our minds which immensely added to my confidence and reduced hesitancy. I and my paternal uncle assisted 30 people at the SDM office in Shahpur in filing an appeal and providing compensation of INR 1,75,000 to the tendu leaves farmers.



SHARDA RAKES

"When I was subjected to abuse and torture by my in-laws, I decided to walk back to my parent's house. Here I came in contact with CASA's women's group. With their support, I gathered the courage to walk up to the Court and file a case seeking justice against domestic violence. The thorns of social stigma and slanders made my heart bleed yet I did not succumb to the pain. I appeared at every court proceeding session and demanded my Right to dignity. I claimed my Right to Property from my in-laws. The case is still active in the court. Even now my heart feels heavy as I speak up and try not to break down crying. This is the reality. We, women, have to fight against all odds and claim our Rights. If we step back fearing the conservative ideologies of society, there shall be no improvements to our situation. Women have to stand up to fight against domestic violence be it with regard to one's own self, or one's daughter, sister, mother or neighbouring women".



SARSWATI DURWE

"When I became the head of the panchayat, it was not easy for me to step out of the house and work. Gradually I have developed the perseverance and calibre to manage the work and the responsibility. In every village committee meeting, I attempt to encourage women and peers to put their thoughts and concerns across. To ensure that the girls are educated properly, I frequently visit the schools and take an update from the teachers. If some girls have dropped out without notice, I visit their parents personally. I also keep myself updated on whether the implementation of the women-related policies at the panchayat level is on the right track or not. It is my endeavour and vision that all the women in the village should have access to their Fundamental Rights. During the Pandemic, CASA worked closely with us to distribute dry rations and awareness support to the women in the village. I am grateful for their efforts in uplifting women".

Women Lead Campaign Against Alcoholism

MD MAHFOOZ ALAM

Women in the Kamraj village of Chattisgarh are setting an example for society by running a campaign to ban liquor. The village is populated by a tribal community that survives out of agriculture and the selling of non-timber forest produce like Mahua.

Because of the easy availability of Mahua, the production of country liquor has increased manifold, whereby, instead of earning a livelihood for their families, several men spend their days and nights indulging in heavy drinking. The adverse effect has been on women, youths and children. While women have to go through domestic abuse from their inebriated men every day, the youths and children, following the suit of their elders, are catching up on drinking habits at an early age. The most appalling instance of all is the drunken teachers in public schools. Could you dare to imagine the state of students in those schools?

Despite being aware of the situation, the village heads have failed to take any concrete action.

Exasperated with the environment, the women from the village decided to take the matter into their hands with help of Lok Astha (Volunteer organisation of CASA) to get rid of the evil of alcoholism. Women leaders Prem Bai, Devbati and others consolidated a group of women and concerned men who worked towards counselling and sensitising the villagers on checking the production and consumption of country liquor.

The group arranged several meetings with villagers to discuss their concerns. Initially, the response was good, many families stopped the production of liquor. However, with time, alcohol brewing, being a business in itself, was back and so was the consumption by the villagers.

The women-led group decided to forcibly ban the production, and along with the police, they started raiding and ceasing alcohol from the houses. Conversations about the efforts of these women started to reach corners of the village but this act of courage didn't go well with a few influential people.

The conservative and discriminatory sections were unhappy that how could women with "no identity" take such a bold step. They were also unhappy with Lata Netam of Lok Astha who was consistently assisting the group.

Meanwhile, an attempt was made to break the unity of the group and disrupt their campaign. Some of the women did give up on being forced by their spouses; however, Prem Bai, Devbati and other men and women remained intact with their commitment to getting rid of alcoholism in their village.

The women were even summoned to the Panchayat only to be humiliated by the village head and laughed off by the other men.

However, they remained persistent in their mission. They kept visiting the Gariyaband police station to file complaints against those who tried to impede their mission. Police too made efforts but nothing concrete came out of it.

Finally, with the help of Lok Astha, the group decided to take the matter to Mahila Ayog (women's Commission), Raipur. Taking serious note of the complaint, the Commission called all the concerned parties to Raipur and the issue of alcoholism and domestic violence against women were addressed with the strictest dictates to

the village head and other concerned parties.

The repeated efforts of the group led by the women are now bearing the fruits. Teachers found guilty of

consuming liquor in school were punished. There has been a reduction in the production and consumption of alcohol. The group is also sensitizing and counselling the youths and children who had caught up in the habit of drinking.



DEVBATI



PREM BAI



DISCLAIMER

Published in Volume-133
Issue-2/2021, Page no: 11-12

Published in the (page number) of CASA's previous edition (Newsletter name), the article titled "The story of Tribal life in Dudu Block", highlights the life of Kalbelia and Bagariya communities in Rajasthan. The communities were mentioned as "Tribes", in the publication, whereas recently they have been granted the status of "Scheduled Castes", by the Rajasthan Government. Further, the English translation of Bagariya community's name was mentioned as "Bagdia", reciprocating the local pronunciation, which despite acceptability, doesn't formally align with the officially written form of the community's name in The Government of Rajasthan's List of Scheduled Castes. We are aware that these errors might hurt the sentiments of community members by leaving a space for miscommunication. Undertaking the full responsibility, we are republishing the article with the necessary corrections, reaffirming our commitment to putting out stories with umpteenth authenticity and leaving no room for miscommunication.



The Story of Rustic Life in Dudu Block

KAJOL TANAYA

Art mirrors the soul. Dance, songs and festivals reflect not only the inherent beauty of the individual practising it but also the intangible treasures of the source community. The signs of cultural refinement of the Kalbelia community, evident in their folksongs and traditional dance, have thereby earned them a place on the Intangible Heritage List of Rajasthan under UNESCO in 2010. Originally known to be the snake catchers, sapera or venom traders, the Kalbelia community fell out of its conventional occupation following the Wildlife Act of 1972. Ever since the rustic population has adjusted to several other occupations, predominantly the forms of daily labour.

In the Dudu block of Rajasthan, the Kalbelia community is majorly nomadic. They reside in the pasture lands outside village premises without any land Rights. Their isolation from village life limits their administrative knowledge and access to government-provided facilities. Similar to the Kalbelias, the Bagariya community of Rajasthan inhabits the exterior margins of the villages. Bagariyas traditionally led the cattle of the peasants for grazing. Even today, Bagariya men migrate to Kota, offering labour during the harvest season. Kalbelias and Bagariyas in Dudu block chiefly earn their livelihoods by preparing charcoal from the branches of a desert

plant known as Vilayeti Babul, scientifically *Prosopis juliflora*. The labourers built make-shift tents out of bamboo, shards of clothes and tarpaulin, near the kilns as they got involved in year-round charcoal production.

The semi-arid weather added to the emissions from heat chambers, making the task physically extensive. However, the revenue generated is barely sufficient to sustain the labourers. Therefore, the young boys in the families are prematurely dragged into the fetters of the daunting labour where exposure to charcoal dust and bone-melting heat from the kilns renders them vulnerable to life-threatening diseases such as cancer and trauma. As the group's distance from the village restricts access to education beyond primary school, the alternative employment opportunities for the youth are also narrow.

Apart from child labour, child marriage has also been prevalent in these tribes. Young girls and women are subjected to various forms of exploitation. From trafficking to prostitution and even daily labour at charcoal kilns during menstruation, several women have literally and metaphorically been "sacrificed" in the population's quest to manage their minimal sustenance.

Capacity Building and Promotion of Leadership



CASA's local volunteers have a fair knowledge of the ethnic composition in their area of action. In the Dudu block, acting through the local volunteers, CASA could grasp the predicament of the rural population's existence in the remote margins. Through years of efforts, our local volunteers have not only brought the attention of authorities to the livelihood concerns of the tribal and forest-dwelling people but have also enrolled them on Government-provided livelihood schemes such as MGNREGA.

The deprived community's women were encouraged to break out of their cocoons and receive empowerment-based training conducted periodically by CASA in Udaipur. A member of the marginalised community, Babulal Bagriya rose to the position of treasurer at Rajasthan Vikas Manch, promoted by CASA, capacitating the communities to voice their concerns and be heard by accessing a broader platform. These efforts are consistently guiding the rural population towards building representation and taking up progressive leadership. Child marriage and child labour were substantially reduced through education and awareness among the community members. As the conservative shell has begun to rupture, progressive ideas and improvements are confirming their foothold in the community's perspective of the world.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, most rural areas in India were superstitious about the coronavirus disease. From disregarding it as an "urban disease" that can not enter the villages to consuming unscientific recipes for prevention, the reaction to the initial days of the coronavirus outbreak was not only ignorant but also dangerous. Since the Kalbelias and Bagariyas are relatively isolated from the village interiors, the spread of infection by human interaction was less probable. However, the availability of daily labour squeezed a dearth of opportunity, draining the income sources of the tribal population. Through the local volunteers, the Kalbelia and Bagariya communities received linkages to Government schemes for assistance. Furthermore, to safeguard their hygiene and health, CASA provided vulnerable families with hygiene kits including masks and soaps.

Pic.: Babulal Bagdia, member of Rajasthan Vikas Manch, managed by CASA



EVENTS



A three-day agricultural camp was organised in Dumka, Jharkhand to disseminate information on scientific agricultural practices. A total of 26 participants attended the camp and also visited the fields to get exposure to modern agricultural methods.



CASA's Zonal-Level Youth Convention 2022 was organised by the East Zone team in CASA's Resource Centre, Ghaghara, Jharkhand.

Spanning from 11th to 13th of March 2022, the convention emphasised the relevance and ever-rising importance of youth participation and leadership in community development.

The participant's group comprised 48 culturally diverse and enthusiastic youth from West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Odisha who came together under one roof to enhance their learning and widen their perspectives. Dr. Aravind Ekka, the Medical Officer in charge of Ghaghara Block, communicated the responsibilities of youth for future building through an inspirational speech.

The young individuals engage in a focused group discussion to analyze the present context of their community and the prospect of youth involvement in rural areas.



The State Government of West Bengal reopened the government-sponsored schools on the 17th of February 2022. Having shut the educational procedure since the March 2020 lockdown, it has been close to 2 years since the learning and growth of the underprivileged children have been impeded.

With the reopening, CASA sees new hope in the improvement of the condition of the students. To ensure that this hope translates only into progressive reality, CASA volunteers are visiting schools to conduct awareness campaigns.

Through these campaigns, students and the teaching staff are consistently reminded of the COVID APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR to be followed.

Engage to Educate

Children retain information better when learned in association with interesting activities. Education provided to a child propagates to the family at large. Therefore, CASA conducted a COVID-19 awareness campaign in the Senior Secondary School of Damakheda, Rajasthan to engage and constructively educate the children.

A drawing competition was simultaneously held on the theme of the pandemic to allow a flush of creative talent on paper. Children were informed about the pandemic-appropriate behaviour and provided with free masks and pamphlets.







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